

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 OES-09 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08  
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R 150815Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9555

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 6580

DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID FOR NE

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: EAID, AF, US  
SUBJ: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MR. DASTAGIR PANJSHIRI

1. SUMMARY: IN MY INITIAL CALL ON THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MR. DASTAGIR PANJSHIRI, WE DISCUSSED THE PRIORITIES OF HIS MINISTRY AND THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE USAID AND THE PEACE CORPS IN ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL GOALS IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WOULD BE MUTUALLY COMPATIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON AUGUST 8, ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACTING USAID DIRECTOR, THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AND THE CHIEF OF USAID EDUCATION DIVISION, I MADE MY INITIAL CALL ON THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION. AFTER EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES, I NOTED THAT THE MINISTER HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM A REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA, AND THAT PAST RESEARCH DONE THERE INDICATED A CLEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION LEVEL AND POPULATION GROWTH. THE MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THIS LINKAGE AS ONE POTENT ARGUMENT FOR GREATER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR THE POPULACE.

3. I NEXT ASKED MINISTER PANJSHIRI TO OUTLINE THE PRIORITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. THE MINISTER  
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RESPONDED FIRST WITH SOME GENERAL COMMENTS WHICH DEALT WITH THE PAST TWENTY YEARS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND THE U.S. AND HIS DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP. HE STATED THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS NON-ALIGNED, INDEPENDENT IN ITS THINKING AND THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE BROUGHT THE WORLD TOGETHER, THUS UNDERSCORING THE

NEED FOR MUTUAL COOPERATION AMONG NATIONS.

4. THE MINISTER NEXT OUTLINED THE EMERGING EDUCATION POLICY OF THE DRA AS A RESPONSE TO THE "FACTS OF LIFE" OF EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN, E.G., 1.2 MILLION BOYS AND 1.6 MILLION GIRLS OF SCHOOL AGE NOT IN SCHOOL, ONLY 23 PERCENT OF SCHOOL AGE POPULATION IN SCHOOL AND AN ILLITERACY RATE OF OVER 90 PERCENT OF THOSE BETWEEN THE AGES OF EIGHTEEN AND SIXTY. MR. PANJSHIRI THEN STATED THAT, UNLIKE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WHICH COULD BE COMPLETED IN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME, EDUCATING A NEW GENERATION WOULD TAKE FROM FIVE TO TEN YEARS.

5. MINISTER PANJSHIRI NEXT PRESENTED HIS VIEWS ON THE ASSISTANCE TO EDUCATION GIVEN TO AFGHANISTAN IN THE PAST. IN ESSENCE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE HELD LITTLE REGARD FOR THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF SUCH ASSISTANCE. HE SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO A PREVIOUS FOREIGN SPONSORED LITERACY CAMPAIGN IN WHICH 90,000 PEOPLE RECEIVED LITERACY CLASSES WITH ONLY 16,000 BECOMING LITERATE. HE FURTHER POINTED TO A UNESCO ADVISOR WHO HAD NOT BEEN WELL USED DURING THE LAST SIX YEARS OF HIS RESIDENCE IN KABUL AND WHO, IN THE MINISTER'S VIEW, WAS VASTLY OVERPAID. (NOTE: WE HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE DISSATISFACTION WITH UNESCO ON THE PART OF OFFICIALS UNDER THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND THAT IT APPEARS THAT THE DRA DOES

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NOT PLAN TO REPEAT THIS EXPERIENCE.)

6. AS AN EXAMPLE OF RECENT EXPERIMENTS BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO REACH LARGE NUMBERS OF ILLITERATE ADULTS, THE MINISTER STATED THAT 40,000 SOLDIERS HAD RECEIVED LITERACY TRAINING OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS. THEY WERE TAUGHT BY QUOTE PATRIOTIC END QUOTE OFFICERS AND WOULD RETURN TO THEIR VILLAGES TO PASS ON THEIR NEW SKILLS TO OTHERS.

7. IN ORDER TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE ADULT POPULATION, THE MINISTER STATED THAT CENTRAL AND LOCAL ADULT EDUCATION CENTERS WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR WHICH NO BUILDINGS NOW EXIST. SPECIFICALLY, A TOTAL OF 244 SUCH CENTERS WOULD BE NEEDED AS WELL AS 2,000 TEACHERS. IN MR. PANJSHIRI'S VIEW, THE BILL FOR SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD BE BETWEEN \$2 AND \$4 MILLION. THIS ADULT EDUCATION EFFORT IS, ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, THE FIRST PRIORITY OF THE MOE.

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8. THE MINISTER'S NEXT PRIORITY IN EDUCATION IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDINGS WITH A TARGET OF 3,200 NEW SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. MR. PANJSHIRI POINTED TO A TOTAL OF 670 SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT THIS YEAR TO BE FINANCED BY IBRD AND USAID. (NOTE: THE USAID SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM IS WELL BEHIND SCHEDULE AS A RESULT OF POOR MANAGEMENT AND LIMITED TECHNICAL SKILL ON THE PART OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. WHETHER THE OBVIOUS ENERGY AND POLITICAL/SOCIAL RHETORIC OF THE DRA WILL IMPROVE THIS TRACK RECORD REMAINS TO BE SEEN.) AS FAR AS THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS FOR THESE SCHOOLS IS CONCERNED, MR. PANJSHIRI STATED THAT THIS WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION. WE POINTED OUT THAT 12,000 TEACHERS WITH LESS THAN TWELVE GRADES OF EDUCATION WERE PRESENTLY TEACHING, AND THEIR UPGRADING WAS, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. THE MINISTER CONFIRMED THIS FACT AND SAID THAT UNICEF WILL OFFER IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO THESE TEACHERS AND THAT NIGHT CLASSES WOULD ALSO BE HELD TO UPGRADE THOSE TEACHERS WITH LESS THAN TWELVE GRADES OF EDUCATION. (NOTE: THESE CRASH PROGRAMS SHOULD, IN OUR VIEW, BE CAREFULLY ANALYZED BY THE USAID TEACHER TRAINING PROJECT DESIGN TEAM WHEN IT ARRIVES IN OCTOBER, PENDING PID APPROVAL IN AID/W.)

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9. INsofar AS PRIMARY EDUCATION IS CONCERNED, THE MINISTER STATED THAT FIRST PRIORITY WOULD GO TO GIRLS, AND THAT THE MOE WAS EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF ADDING

KINDERGARTEN TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CYCLE.

10. THE MINISTER NEXT DISCUSSED THE TRAINING OF MOE PERSONNEL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BRAIN-DRAIN PROBLEM. HE BELIEVES THAT, FOR THE MOST PART, TRAINING SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN COUNTRIES SIMILAR IN CULTURE, ECONOMIC LEVEL AND MAGNITUDE OF EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS, INSTEAD OF PROGRAMS IN MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD, IN HIS VIEW, REDUCE BRAIN-DRAIN SIGNIFICANTLY. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE MINISTER COMPLETED HIS PRESENTATION BY POINTING TO THE TRAINING POLICY OF THE PREVIOUS REGIME WHICH REWARDED RELATIVES AND FRIENDS AND IN THE MINISTER'S VIEW, CONTRIBUTED NOTHING TO THE COUNTRY.

11. IN RESPONSE TO THE MINISTER'S COMMENT, I POINTED OUT TO HIM THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE STATED EDUCATION POLICY OF THE DRA AND OUR CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE. I ALSO MADE THE OBSERVATION THAT ONE POSSIBLE CAUSE OF BRAIN-DRAIN MIGHT BE DUE TO THE LACK OF INCENTIVE BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT TO RETURNED PARTICIPANTS. FINALLY, I SUGGESTED THAT THE PEACE CORPS MIGHT BE OF VALUE TO THE MOE IN THE PURSUIT OF ITS GOALS SINCE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS MIGHT BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR VARIOUS JOBS, E.G., ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND EXPERTISE IN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION.

12. THE MINISTER SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN THE PEACE CORPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION. HE STATED THAT AN AGREEMENT HAD RECENTLY BEEN REACHED WITH THE INDIAN EMBASSY TO PROVIDE 100 ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS FOR AFGHANISTAN'S TEACHER TRAINING NEEDS. THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR EMPHASIZED

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THAT THE MAJORITY OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE IN HIGH PRIORITY SECTORS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION. HE SAID THAT WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR, ENGLISH TEACHING IS GENERALLY NOT A PRIORITY PROJECT AND SUGGESTED THAT, GIVEN THE SUMMARY OF PROBLEMS AND PRIORITIES OUTLINED BY THE MINISTER, HE MIGHT BE MORE INTERESTED IN CONSIDERING FUTURE PEACE CORPS COLLABORATION IN THE MINISTRY'S SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND TEACHER TRAINING PROJECTS. THE MINISTER APPEARED TO REACT WITH SOME DEGREE OF INTEREST AND ASKED THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR TO PROVIDE HIM WITH A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND A PROPOSAL OF POTENTIAL AREAS OF COLLABORATION WHICH HE AND HIS STAFF MIGHT STUDY.

13. THE MEETING ENDED WITH THE MINISTER'S ASSURANCE OF HIS AVAILABILITY AT ALL TIMES FOR DISCUSSIONS AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO A FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH US.

14. COMMENT: THE MEETING REVEALED A MINISTER WHO IS OBVIOUSLY ENERGETIC, COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF EDUCATION AND TO THE IDEALS OF THE RECENT REVOLUTION. WHETHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION PREVIOUSLY DISENFRANCHISED AND WHAT FORM EDUCATION WILL TAKE, REMAINS TO BE SEEN AND BEARS CLOSE WATCHING. AT FIRST BLUSH, IT APPEARS THAT THE EDUCATION POLICY AS OUTLINED BY THE MINISTER IN OUR FIRST MEETING RUNS PARALLEL TO THAT OF THE USAID AND OF THE CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE, E.G., DELIVERY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION TO THE MAJORITY OF THE RURAL SCHOOL AGE POPULATION, EMPHASIS ON ADULT OR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND THE UP-GRADING OF TEACHERS. END COMMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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